

# NEWS FROM ED MARKEY

**United States Congress**

**Massachusetts Seventh District**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**July 15, 2004**

**CONTACT: Mark Bayer**

**or Colin McCormick**

**(202) 225-2836**

## **REP. MARKEY SEEKS ANSWERS TO WHY U.S. IS SENDING PRISONERS TO COUNTRIES THAT PRACTICE TORTURE**

**Congressman investigates black-ops practice of extraordinary rendition**

**WASHINGTON, DC** - Representative Edward Markey (D-MA), a senior member of the Select Committee on Homeland Security and the Energy and Commerce Committee, today released letters to Attorney General John Ashcroft and Acting CIA Director John McLaughlin, asking why the U.S. is sending detainees suspected of terrorism to foreign countries such as Syria, Egypt and Jordan, where they are likely to be tortured during interrogations.

“President Bush declared that ‘the values of this country are such that torture is not a part of our soul and our being,’” Rep. Markey said. “But the Bush Administration appears to be side-stepping moral and legal barriers to torture by sending prisoners to other countries known to practice torture, including Syria, Egypt, and Jordan, to be interrogated there. This secretive practice, called ‘extraordinary rendition’, is not only a moral outrage, but it also puts our troops serving abroad at greater risk of being tortured if they are captured. Extraordinary rendition has no place in our foreign or military policy and should be ended.”

Extraordinary rendition is the secretive practice of extra-judicial transfer of detainees to foreign governments for interrogation, usually because the foreign governments are willing to use harsh interrogation techniques, including torture, that would not be legal in the United States. On October 17, 2002, former CIA Director George Tenet testified to the Joint House and Senate Select Intelligence Committees that “by 11 September, CIA (in many cases with the FBI) had rendered 70 terrorists to justice around the world.” U.S. diplomats and intelligence officials, speaking anonymously, have repeatedly confirmed that rendition continues and, if anything, has increased since September 11. The most well-known case is that of Maher Arar, a Syrian-born Canadian citizen who was detained while transiting through JFK Airport in September 2002 and extra-legally sent to Syria for interrogation, where he was held for nearly a year and reportedly tortured. After his release and return to Canada, he was never been charged with any crime. Attorney General Ashcroft stated that the U.S. received “assurances” from Syria that it would not torture Arar. Arar’s case received attention because he is the only known example of a rendered person who returned from rendition to tell his story.

The letters sent today by Rep. Markey asked Attorney General Ashcroft and Acting CIA Director McLaughlin how many individuals have been subject to extraordinary rendition since September 11 and to which countries; whether rendition has resulted in significant intelligence findings; why “assurances” not to torture from a known torturer such as Syria were accepted in the Arar case; and why rendition does not violate U.S. obligations under the international Torture Convention.

Rep. Markey is the author of H.R. 4674, legislation that directs the State Department to draw up a list of countries that routinely practice torture during detention and interrogation and bans all rendition, return or transfer to any nation on that list. The legislation contains a very limited waiver in cases in which a mechanism exists to ensure that a person will not be tortured, including, at a minimum, immediate, unfettered, and continuing access to an independent humanitarian organization. The bill also explicitly

permits legal, treaty-based extradition, in which a person being extradited has recourse to appeal his extradition in a U.S. court on the basis of concerns that he may be tortured.

Rep. Markey concluded, “Extraordinary rendition is the 800-pound gorilla in our foreign and military policymaking that no one wants to talk about. It involves our nation outsourcing interrogations to countries that are known to practice torture, something which erodes America’s moral credibility and could result in others engaging in abusive interrogation practices against American troops and civilians overseas.”

Additional information is available at Rep. Markey’s website, <http://www.house.gov/markey>.

# # #